

On Pegasus' Wings

Volume 1, Issue 4

May 1, 2007

Aviation hosts GWOT-TROT

1st Lt. Annalies Hickerson
Task Force Atlas

BAGRAM AIRFIELD -The Iron Mike Chapter of the Army Aviation Association of America hosted a 5K/10K GWOT-Trot race and chili cook-off April 14.

This event was organized to raise money for AAAA's scholarship funds. Task Force Atlas spearheaded the organization and execution of the race, which raised more than \$6,000.

"The turn out for the run was well over what was expected, which seemed to have a positive impact on everyone's moral," said Capt. Thomas J. Whitlow, commander Company A, TF Atlas. "More than 300 people showed up the day of the run to register."

At 6:30 a.m. that morning, more than 1,000 runners representing a cross-section of service members including Army Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, coalition forces, and civilian contractors, crossed the start line and started down Disney Drive. Each runner received a commemorative T-shirt for their participation.

"This run was organized to support the AAAA, Iron Mike Chapter and also to bring us all together to participate in the first run of the season," said Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols, TF Atlas command sergeant major.

Awards were given to the first, second and third place male and female runners for both the 5K and 10K race. A plaque was also presented to a team of 10 runners from the 36th Engineer Battalion for having the highest placing members overall.

"It felt good to come out and run with other enlisted Soldiers, officers, coalition forces, and other members of the armed forces that are stationed here," said Spc. Chance Gibbons, aviation operations specialist, TF Pegasus.

After the race, a chili cook off was held in the MWR clamshell. The runners were given the opportunity to taste test the different chili recipes. Sergeant Larry Howard from the Aviation Dining facility was the winner of the cook off.

Similar races took place at other operation bases by members from the 82nd CAB including Salerno, Kandahar Airfield and in Iraq.

This was the second annual race and chili cook-off sponsored by the Iron

Mike Chapter in support of AAAA's scholarship fund. Last year, the race was conducted on Longstreet Road at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Editor's note: Additional GWOT-TROT stories and photos can be found on page 3.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Members of the Armed Forces, coalition forces and civilian personnel totaling more than 1,000 registered runners take off from the starting line to compete for first place in the 5K and 10K races.

Springtime in Hindu Kush mountains

Col. Kelly Thomas
Task Force Pegasus Commander

Dear Pegasus family, it's springtime in Afghanistan and the Hindu Kush mountains are quickly losing their snowy white caps. Team Pegasus has adapted as well to the new environment and is performing magnificently every day. Your daily thoughts, prayers, letters, and packages have all played a crucial role in the continued high morale of all the Troopers in the Pegasus Brigade.

I thought March was a busy month until I reviewed what we've accomplished in April. Let me share a few highlights.

First, nearly the entire Bagram Air Base community celebrated Passover or Easter in several meaningful celebrations and ceremonies. As we worshipped and prayed together, it seemed as though the current conflict came to a halt, even if it was only for an hour or so.

Next, the Iron Mike Chapter of the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) hosted the "GWOT Trot", a 5km and 10km run that was attended by over 1,000 runners from many different branches of the service as well as representatives from at least a dozen different nations stationed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Fort Bragg, NC.

Of course, we finished off the race with a tradi-

tional chili cook-off afterwards. Congratulations to Sgt. Larry Howard for winning the "Best Chili" award! Hot, spicy chili at 7:00 in the morning...mmm, mmm, good!

In all, we earned over \$6,000 for the AAAA Iron Mike Scholarship Fund. Way to go! Thanks to Task Force Atlas for organizing this great event.



Col. Kelly Thomas

The Fort Bragg FRG also got into the spirit with "The Amazing Race" with over 30 teams and 130 contestants. Thank you for all the volunteer hours and effort to host this great event.

Last of all, our commitment was tested when the Secretary of Defense recently announced that OEF and OIF tours will be extended to fifteen months. As difficult as this news is to receive, we are committed to serving together to defend our Nation's freedom as well as the peace and security of our loved ones at home. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you, just as we are confident that your best thoughts and prayers are with us. Thank you for your service and the sacrifices you make every day. Without your support, we could not complete this difficult mission. All The Way! Airborne!

Task Force Pegasus
OEF VIII
82nd Combat Aviation Brigade

On Pegasus' Wings

Published by Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs

This Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of **On Pegasus Wings** are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or Department of the Army.

The editorial content of this monthly publication is the responsibility of the Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs, APO AE 09354.

Commander:
Command Sgt. Maj.:
Public Affairs Officer:
Editor:

Task Force Pegasus

Col. Kelly Thomas
Command Sgt. Maj. David Brasfield
Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble
Pfc. Aubree Rundle

TASK FORCE TALON
Bagram
Lt. Col. Nicholas Chronis
Command Sgt. Maj. James H. Franklin

TASK FORCE CORSAIR
Kandahar
Lt. Col. George Huggins
Command Sgt. Maj. Keith Little

TASK FORCE LIGHTNING
Bagram
Lt. Col. John Birdsong
Sgt. Maj. Josephine Klingensmith

TASK FORCE ATLAS
Bagram
Lt. Col. Frederick H. Jensen
Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols

TASK FORCE DESERT HAWK
Salerno
Lt. Col. Donald Kwan
Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Powers

TASK FORCE CHARGER
Bagram
Maj. Philip Mazingo
Sgt. Maj. Todd Vance

Note from the Editor:

This month our task force has covered quite a few angles with full spectrum aviation operations. We even had the chance to all come together for an event this month. Thank you for everyone's hard work and dedication that continues to keep us all in the fight.

If you have input for 'On Pegasus' Wings' please feel free to contact me at:

aubree.rundle@afghan.swa.army.mil or
DSN: 318-231-2759

I'm always looking for opportunities to provide mission coverage within TF Pegasus down to the battalion level.

Desert Hawk, Corsair participate in GWOT- Trot

By Spc. Geneve Mankel
Task Force Desert Hawk

FORWARD OPERATIONS BASE SALERNO-Task Force Desert Hawk participated in the aviation-wide 5K/10K GWOT-TROT race and also hosted a barbecue April 14 in support of the Army Aviation Association of America annual scholarship fund.

More than 285 runners participated. First time 5K race runner Spc. Eunice Guerra commented, "I just hope the ambulance doesn't have to pick me up."

After the race, a barbecue was held as a reward for all the runners' contributions to the scholarship fund and performance during the race.

"I want to thank everyone that helped out in any way with the

GWOT Trot. Because of every single participant; military and civilian, runner or volunteer, everyone involved turned this event into a success," commented Capt. Erika Salerno, TF Desert Hawk personnel officer.



Spc. Geneve Mankel

Participants from the GWOT-TROT at Forward Operations Base Salerno begin their 10k/5k race April 14.

By 2nd Lt. Eric Williams
Task Force Corsair

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD- Task Force Corsair and other Coalition forces at Kandahar came together for the second annual Iron Mike Chapter, Army Aviation Association of America GWOT TROT, 5K run and chili cook off April 14.

The event drew more than 130 competitors from all branches of the armed forces in support of the AAAA scholarship fund.

Task Force Corsair Commander, Lt. Col. Dan Huggins, commented, "The GWOT TROT was successful and went [off] without a hitch due to the hard work and attention to detail that the NCO and Soldiers displayed both when planning and executing the event."

TF Corsair was able to provide chili, non-alcoholic beer, and Gatorade for over 200 people after the race.

"The chili had enough kick to singe the hair off your chest," said the NCOIC of food preparation for the event.



Courtesy photo

Registered runners for the GWOT-TROT race to complete the 5K run at Kandahar Airfield April 14.

Chaplain shares how Warrior Psalms protects, encourages

WO1 Kenneth Body
Task Force Pegasus

BAGRAM AIRFIELD - It is often said that there are five basic needs of a Soldier, and one of those is spiritual. The fulfilling need to believe in a higher being. Many Soldiers deploy believing that they truly are protected through divine intervention and through this belief, Soldiers are able to cope with the uncertainties of war.

This concept was the foundation of the message Chaplain (Maj.) Terry Simmons spoke on April 17 at a prayer breakfast held in the Aviation Dining facility sponsored by the Pegasus chaplain team.

Simmons, chaplain for the Enduring Faith Gospel Services, referred to Psalms 91 commonly known as the "War Psalms" as he shared a few of his experiences on how through his trust in God and his unwavering faith, he was protected on several occasions. He also stated that Psalms 91 tells us that "regardless of how things may seem, God is always there to lead, guide, and protect us."

"In times of war, we need to know the God almighty," he said.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Members of the Enduring Faith Gospel Choir sing during the Task Force Pegasus prayer breakfast.

Many in attendance agreed with this thought.

"I believe that I'm walking under the His protection and I can stand boldly and fight knowing that God has my back," said Air Force Maj. Tony Whiteside, Task Force Pegasus, electronic warfare officer.

Chinooks essential to ground troops

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
TF Pegasus Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE, NARAY— Pilots, crew chiefs and door gunners from Company B, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade (Task Force Talon) continue to provide operational support to ground troops from Company C, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry, 10th Mountain Division (Task Force Spartan) across the Northeastern region of Afghanistan.

Task Force Spartan's team elements around FOB Naray receive combat supplies and air assault assistance for Task Force Talon and the 82nd CAB (TF Pegasus).

Spartan's Soldiers carry out movements throughout the northeastern region of Afghanistan and rely on aviation task forces to provide provisions and transportation to their mission locations, said Capt. Jeffery O'Dell, operations commander for 3-71st Cav.

"Without road developed in these mountain regions, its difficult to get supplies out to the combat operation areas," said Staff Sgt. George Beckett, logistics noncommissioned officer in charge, Co. C, 3-71st Cav.

Supplies TF Talon deliver for the troops are: am-



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Troops from Co. C., 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry, 10th Mountain Division make their way down a mountain to board a CH-47 (Chinook) from a landing zone near Copenhagen, Afghanistan to move to another out post.

munition, food and water, mail, and combat equipment.

These supplies are transported in CH-47s (Chinooks) by means of sling loading cargo underneath the aircraft or packing the aircraft's body with troops and supplies. A CH-47 can carry several thousands of pounds at a time

"Task Force Pegasus transports supplies almost weekly, keeping our Soldiers well equipped and satisfied" said Beckett. "If we don't receive a delivery of water, Soldiers don't drink water, aviation support is that essential."

"Whether it is mail, ammo or food packs, whenever a re-supply helicopter arrives, especially before a mission, our team's entire attitude changes for the better," said Sgt. David Fischer, fire squad leader, Co. C, 3-71st Cav. "Getting mail out here is like Christmas day."

"This operation and location would not exist without the support that Bravo Co. and TF Pegasus provides for our troops," said O'Dell.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

A Soldier from Co. C, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry, 10th Mountain Division, hooks a supply conex to a CH-47 (Chinook) to deliver to a combat operations base in Northeastern Afghanistan.

TF Pegasus returns to Egyptian Hospital

Chaplain (Capt.) Shmuel Felzenberg
Task Force Pegasus Chaplain

BAGRAM AIRFIELD- As we approach the end of our fourth month in theater, we continue the fight and mission to which we have been tasked. Even while some are continually involved in the duties demanded of them by their respective jobs, many yet have managed to get out and about, see other parts of the country, and participate in some extraordinarily interesting missions. Not just our pilots, but members of the staff, to include our RST (Religious Support Team) members, and even some junior soldiers have been afforded opportunities never before experienced in their lives.

Missions elsewhere aside, this month saw yet another Humanitarian Aid Relief Mission at the Egyptian Hospital, which benefited upwards of 300 Local National residents of Bagram. Participating in this holy endeavor were 22 of our finest Pegasus troopers. We also held our second brigade-level Pegasus Prayer Breakfast, targeted at sustaining and building the spiritual readiness of our deployed soldiers. As is known, it is the spiritual strength of the soldier that will ultimately sustain that soldier during times of crisis, allowing him/her to stand and prevail when others might fall and fail. Some 40 of our finest participated in this spiritual fitness event.

Nevertheless, special events and unique opportunities aside, there is no doubt that deployment is not always exciting and often poses unique challenges both to the deployed service member and their stateside spouse, children or other family members. Foremost amongst these issues may well be separation anxiety caused by the months spent apart from loved ones. This can have significant impact upon all concerned, especially those with children. Speaking about those with children, it is the responsibility of the deployed Service Member to stay in touch with loved ones stateside, to help them remember that they have not been just "left behind"; or as in the case with children, that they have not been forgotten.

In turn, it is the equal responsibility of spouses and family members stateside to actively remember those who have deployed, and support them as appropriate.

All donations for Humanitarian assistance can be mailed to:

Shmuel Felzenberg
TF PEGASUS
HHC, 82nd CAB
APO, AE 09354



See CHAPLAIN, page 8.

Charlie rocks Safety Day Competition

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
TF Pegasus Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD—Task Force Atlas organized a Safety Stand down Competition April 7, at the Camp Albert's basketball court marking the completion of their safety day for the month.

"TF Atlas' safety stand-down day this month began with a task force run, followed by company level safety classes and then culminates with a company vs. company sporting event," said Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols, TF Atlas.

"Safety Day gives the Soldiers a chance to break away from the daily grind and learn something new," said CW2 Melanie Taylor, TF Atlas Safety officer.

This month's sporting event was a relay race challenging each of the four companies within the task force to complete the race in the least amount of time. Each company select 10-man teams to compete. The race was divided into six stations.

The first station in the race was the pull up bar. The teams had to complete 150 pull-ups as fast as



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Staff Sgt. Alex Acosta, platoon sergeant, Headquarters Support Company, Task Force Atlas, bends his arms at a 90-degree angle during the third station in the Safety Stand Down Competition. Each 10-man team had to complete a total of 150 dips at this station to advance to the fourth station in the relay race.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Left, Maj. Benjamin Bagoque, former Company B, Task Force Atlas commander and Sgt. 1st Class Yurell Boone, Avionics Platoon Sergeant for Co. B, TF Atlas, flip a five-ton tractor tire down Camp Albert's basketball court during TF Atlas' Safety Stand Down Competition April 7.

possible with full arm extension and chin's passing the bar every time. A lap around the basketball court was required by each team before advancing to the next station.

The "gator push" came next. In sets of two, the teams had to alternate steering and pushing the gator up and down the basketball court.

The dip bar was the next station. Much like the pull-ups, this station also required each team complete 150 repetition. Dips completed, the teams moved on to the "tire flipping" station. In groups of two, the team members took turns flipping a five-ton tractor tire up and down the basketball court. Once each team made it to the opposite end of the court, two of their teammates had to flip the tire back to the beginning.

The fifth station was the weight bench. The teams had to bench press a total of 23,000 lbs. to complete this station. Each repetition weighing 115 lbs, the team had to complete 200 repetitions.

See SAFETY, page 7.

How do you feel about the possible extension?



"I joined the Army to support our over-seas operations. The time spent away from family will be hard, but we have a mission to complete."
Spc. Jonathan Westbay, Task Force Pegasus.



"It's important to our overall mission to continue to stay in the fight." Staying deployed longer is part of that sacrifice." Spc. Chance Gibbons, TF Charger.



"My family found out about the extension before I did and Soldier's should have been given the opportunity to inform their respected families before a public announcement was made. The difficult part about an extended deployment is the time I will spend away from my two-year-old son. Being in the Army and the 82nd Airborne Division, I understand this is part of the sacrifice that is expected to be made as a paratrooper."
Spc. James A. Patterson, TF Atlas.

Soldier's Feedback

Next month's question "What helps you relax when you're not conducting a mission?"

submit your input to: aubree.rundle@afghan.swa.army.mil

SAFETY from page 6

For the last station, the competing teams had 15 minutes to score as many baskets as possible in a basketball game. For each basket the teams scored, a second of time was taken off the total time it took to complete the other five stations.

The winning team received the task force safety plaque to hang in their company's area of operations for the month, said Nichols. This month's winning team is Charlie Company.

"Overall, I'd say safety day achieves its purpose of providing an enjoyable break for the Soldiers with an extra emphasis on keeping them accident free and in the fights," said Taylor.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

On left in unauthorized hat, Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols, Task Force Atlas, negotiates a tie-breaker for the two teams competing for first place during the Safety Stand Down Competition April 7.

Talon hosts NCO Corps Induction

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
TF Pegasus Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD— Task Force Talon held a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony at the MWR clamshell April 7. This ceremony signified a long-standing Army tradition observing the passing of a Soldier into the NCO corps.

The ceremony was organized to recognize the 17 new members of the NCO corps under the command of TF Talon.

“Whenever our junior Soldiers talk about the Army or its leadership, they are talking about you,” TF Talon Command Sgt. Maj. James Franklin said to the formation of NCOs presented at the ceremony.

“A boss drives his men; a leader coaches them... Which one are you?” asked Franklin during his closing statement at the induction.



Sgt. Timothy Dineen

A formation of the 17 Task Force Talon inductees recite the oath of a noncommissioned officer during the NCO Induction Ceremony 7 April at the MWR Clamshell.

Atlas inducts NCOs into Task Force

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
TF Pegasus Public Affairs



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Task Force Atlas Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols recognizes the five inductees during a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony held April 16.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD-Inducting Soldiers into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps provides the opportunity for their task force to recognize the obstacles they have overcome and the challenges they face as leaders to their junior enlisted Soldiers.

Task Force Atlas recognized five, recently-promoted NCOs during an NCO Induction ceremony held at the MWR clamshell April 16.

“You are now embarking on the best, most challenging and rewarding phase of your military career, that of a leader. Accept this challenge being handed to you, and carry into the future the proud traditions you have inherited,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Nichols, Task Force Atlas.

CHAPLAIN from page 5

While for those who have children, spouses or family must work to keep the service member parent actively ever-present in the mind and memory of their children. Especially with the three-month extension looming on the horizon, this separation anxiety is only magnified further. The response must be added resolve and effort to sustain proper spirits, positive mind-set, and work ever so hard to keep that deployed soldier alive and well in the minds of those who love him/her. Not to say that this is an easy task. In fact, there are many times

and many families who may face unique challenges of their own, thus making it all the more difficult. The answer is to utilize any of the many resources available to families in the rear such as chaplains, Social Work Services, ACS, Military One Source, Family Wellness Program, Life Coaches, Red Cross, and of course our unit Family Readiness Groups. With all these resources available at one's fingertips to help mitigate any difficulty, there is no reason why deployment cannot actually be a time of growth, learning and unprecedented gain. Hold the Line! All the way!



From left to right, Sgt. Ronald Maldonado, Sgt. Edwin Shaw and Spc. Jeremy Middleton, mechanics from Co. D., 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, are installing a tail cone on a CH-47 (Chinook) engine as part of the general phase maintenance each Chinook received for every few hundred hours flown.



From left to right, Pfc. Luke Langley, Spc. Zachary Eddy, Sgt. Christopher Galloway, and Staff Sgt. James Graves, all Soldiers from 122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, take an oath of re-enlistment presented by 82nd Airborne Division Commander, Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez April 26.



Above, a CH-47 (Chinook) leaves Forward Operations Base Naray with two palettes of water slingloaded to the aircraft. The water is delivered to different outposts for ground troops.

Left, Sgt. Mike Gurley, flight engineer for Company D, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, pumps the auxiliary power unit on a CH-47 (Chinook) to perform daily systems checks on flight controls, alternating current power for radio transmission and other avionics within the aircraft. The APU is used to perform these daily inspections as a power saver instead of starting the Chinook's engine.

All photos by Pfc. Aburee Rundle

Phasing ensures mechanical integrity

Spc. Nathan W. Hutchison
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD-They are one of the most valuable assets the Army has at its disposal, with the ability to unleash fury, carry cargo, rescue vehicles and troops, and reach its target faster than any other Army helicopter.

With such an important role in mission completion, it is vital that CH-47 Chinooks are maintained and inspected regularly to insure mechanical and structural integrity.

At various flight hours of operation the Chinooks are passed to L3 Vertex, an aircraft maintenance contract company, for phase maintenance after maximum flight hours are met.

"We basically strip the aircraft down, do the inspections and maintenance, and put it back together," said Michael E. Fleming, a mechanic for L3 Vertex.

Boeing and the Army put together plans for maintenance plans based on hours of aircraft operation, and hours accumulate rather quickly with so many missions taking place, said Fleming.

The L3 phase teams consist of mechanics, sheet metal workers, engineers, electricians and other aircraft technicians.

"The crew bring the aircraft to us," said Fleming, "A couple of them will stay with it, but it's mostly us working on the aircraft for these phases."

A couple of the crew members will stay with the aircraft during its phase maintenance, working on some of the cosmetic maintenance, but are mainly there because of familiarity on the specific aircraft, said Staff Sgt. Edward J. Barham, a crew chief from Company A 7th Battalion 158th Regiment, a national guard unit based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

"What we try to do is make the L3 guys' job as easy as possible," said Barham. "We'll track parts that are on order and get the parts, but the phase maintenance is their job; their baby."

The Chinook crew members conduct daily inspections and maintenance that is logged and handed over to the phase team for their maintenance, said Barham.

Some of the phase team's members have been



Spc. Nathan W. Hutchison

Staff Sgt. Edward J. Barham, crew chief with Co. A 7th Battalion, 158th Regiment, a national guard unit based out of Fort Hood, Texas, checks the transmission fluid on a CH-47 (Chinook) in phase.

in Afghanistan for four years, and are experienced Chinook mechanics and technicians, said Sgt. James J. Reeves, also a crew chief from Company A, 7th Battalion 158th Regiment out of Fort Eustis, Va.

"The last thing we want to do is be a monkey wrench and get inside their works," Reeves said.

Once the aircraft is dropped off, it takes the L3 team a limited time to do the phase maintenance, said Fleming.

"They've got this system down," said Reeves, "They're a real great service to the war-fighting effort that goes on here."



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Incoming commander for Company A (Mustangs), 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, Capt. Travis Buehner receives the company guidon from Lt. Col. Nicholas Chronis, TF Talon commander during the company's change of command ceremony April 27. "Mustangs, it has been my honor to serve along side of you these past 22 months.. To me, you are aviation. Travis, you are exactly what this company needs," said Capt. Tyson Hise, outgoing company commander.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Above, 1st Sgt. Timothy Shelton former first sergeant, Company A, 122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, steps away from the company formation now led by 1st Sgt. Mark Myers during their change of command ceremony April 27. "I extend the challenge to you, 1st Sgt. Myers, that you will train, mentor and take care of the Soldier in this company," said Shelton.



Spc. Mary Beard

Above, Incoming commander for Co. B., 122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, Maj. Raymond Meadows passes to guidon back to 1st Sgt. Antoine Duchatelier during the company's change of command ceremony April 16. "You're about to embark on the best journey of your life on Pegasus' Wings," said Maj. Benjamin Bahoque, the outgoing company commander.



Left, outgoing commander, Capt. Brian Roehl, passes the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (Gladiators) guidon to Lt. Col. Nicholas Chronis, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion commander, during the company's change of command ceremony March 23. "Gladiators, I am sincerely looking forward to working alongside each of you to finish our mission here in Afghanistan and all return home to our families," said Capt. Robert Miller, HHC Commander.

Staff Sgt. Daniels Watts

APFT, Army weight control myth, truths explained

Sgt. 1st Class Alicia Breeding
Task Force Pegasus Legal NCOIC

One of the Army's biggest enemies could be considered the rumor mill. It eats away at the leadership's ability to train and lead Soldiers because it causes those same Soldiers to question what is truth and what is rumor. Such is the case with the APFT and the new Weight Control Program, and how they relate to deployed Soldiers.

"You are about to take the Army Physical Fitness Test." These familiar words often solicit a collective groan from the Soldiers that are listening to the instructions. While not an uncommon thing to hear in the states, the instructions were, at one time, rare at Bagram Airfield. However, as the rotations continue for Army units through Afghanistan and the need for Soldiers to remain physically fit is as high as ever, the Army standard for APFT remains in place.

Myth or Truth? Deployed Soldiers do not have to take the APFT.

Myth: Unfortunately, for some, this is simply not the case. ALARACT Message 163-03 specifically states, "Units should conduct physical training and testing, if the mission and conditions permit." Along with the ALARACT message AR 350-1 state: "During deployment, units should plan for and conduct PT as mission and conditions permit." Not all Soldiers will be able to take the APFT due to unit location or mission requirements.

Myth or Truth? A Soldier who fails an APFT while deployed will be flagged.

Truth: IAW AR 350-1 "Soldiers who fail a record APFT for the first time or fail to take a record APFT within the required period will be flagged in accordance with AR 600-8-2. In the event of a record test failure, Commanders may allow Soldiers to retake the test as soon as the Soldier and the Commander feel the Soldier is ready. Soldiers without a medical profile will be retested no later than 90 days following the initial APFT failure."

The New Army Weight Control Program

The new AR 600-9, Army Weight Control Program, came into effect April 2. "The Army traditionally has fostered a military appearance that is neat and trim. Further, an essential function of day-to-day effectiveness and combat readiness of the Army is that all personnel are healthy and physically fit. Self-discipline to maintain proper weight distribution and high standards of appearance is essential to every individual in the Army." For those individuals who find themselves tipping the scales over what the Army allows them to weigh, the new regulation is an important one to become familiar; there are several misconceptions that Soldiers have about the new weight requirements.

Myth or Truth? A Soldier cannot be flagged for exceeding the body fat standards until a complete medical evaluation is done.

Myth. The truth is that a Soldier IAW AR 600-9 CAN be flagged before a medical evaluation is performed if the Soldier does not meet his or her authorized body fat standards. Paragraph 3-2b of AR 600-9 affirms, "Active, Reserve, and National Guard Soldiers exceeding the body fat standard will be provided weight reduction counseling by health care personnel, entered in a Weight Control Program by their unit Commander, and flagged under the provisions of AR 600-8-2. Enrollment in the Army Weight Control Program **STARTS** on the day that the Soldier is informed by the unit Commander that he/she has been entered in a weight control program."

Myth or Truth? A medical exam is required to enroll a Soldier on the overweight program.

Myth. A medical exam is not required to **enroll** a Soldier into the AWCP, however, there are times when a medical exam will be conducted. AR 600-9, paragraph 3-2d states, "a medical evaluation will be accomplished by health care personnel when the Soldier has a medical limitation, or is pregnant, or when requested by the unit Commander. A medical evaluation is also required for Soldiers being considered for separation as a result of failing to make satisfactory progress in a weight control program, or within six months of ETS."

Myth or Truth? A Soldier taking medication that can cause weight gain is exempt from AR 600-9.

Myth. IAW The Office of The Surgeon General, Physical Profiles and AR 600-9, the use of certain medications to treat an underlying medical disorder or the inability to perform aerobic events may contribute to weight gain, but is not generally considered sufficient medical rationale to exempt a Soldier from the requirements of AR 600-9.

Myth or Truth? Deployed Soldiers are exempt from meeting weight standards IAW AR 600-9.

Myth. All deployed Soldiers must meet requirements of AR 600-9. Soldiers exceeding the body fat standard will be provided weight reduction counseling by health care personnel, entered in a Weight Control Program by their unit Commander, and flagged under the provisions of AR 600-8-2. Enrollment in the AWCP starts on the day that the Soldier is informed by the unit Commander that he/she has been entered in a weight control program.

There are many myths or rumors out there about the requirements of Soldiers while deployed. The Army's presence in Afghanistan may be a long one. Soldiers can expect to spend at least a year deployed. The various main installations that house Soldiers have the space and facilities for unit Commanders to administer the APFT as well as run an effective WCP. The importance to maintaining physical fitness and good health are an individual responsibility but failure to do so affects your fellow soldiers. All Soldiers should continue to maintain their physical fitness, especially in a deployed environment, to ensure mission success.